RESULTS OF A QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE SASQUATCH

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ABSTRACT

The returns of 26 respondents to a questionnaire on the sasquatch are presented.

Introduction

In March of 1977 when a conference on sasquatch and related matters was being proposed by Dr. Marjorie Halpin of the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, I thought it would be useful to get a reading on the opinions of some of the participants. Accordingly, approximately 70 questionnaires were sent out to those who had indicated that they might participate in the conference. I received 29 replies, of which 26 were completed questionnaires, the other three being from persons who felt for one reason or another that it would be inappropriate for them to fill out a questionnaire. It appears that those who had done the most research were those most likely to reply, and in fact many of the best-known names in the field of sasquatch research returned a completed questionnaire.

The questionnaire was rather lengthy, hence I can only give a synopsis of the most important points from the results. I will be happy to respond to requests for more information.

The Respondents

Sixteen of the respondents were associated with academic institutions, including one research assistant and one graduate student. The other ten included four authors and one each of the following: self-employed, attorney, x-ray technologist, computer programmer, airline pilot, and social worker. Fourteen of the respondents had doctorates, five had the Master's degree, four had a Bachelor's degree and three indicated less than a college degree. Twenty-two were men and four were women. The mean age was forty-six. The respondents also included three researchers on related topics: vampires, the giant squids, and stoneclads. The responses from the "related" researchers have been specially noted when appropriate. They are indicated by △ (vampire), ☆ (giant squid), and ◇ (stoneclad).

Hours per week devoted to research on sasquatch and related topics among the respondents was as follows:

less than 1 hour per week	5
1-5 hours per week	12◇
11-15 hours per week	3△☆
16-20 hours per week	1
26-30 hours per week	1
more than 40 hours per week	3
no response	1
	26

This appears to represent a small average investment of time on the part of sasquatch researchers in general. However, it should be considered that 17 of 26 respondents indicated that they had been actively interested in sasquatch or related research for more than 10 years; that 17 had interviewed at least one sasquatch eyewitness; and that 16 had carried out field research on sasquatch, 9 extensive field research. Furthermore, although none of the respondents claimed a sasquatch observation, five had heard anomalous sounds; three had smelled an unusual odor; and eight had seen tracks which might belong to sasquatch. Two had examined the frozen corpse of what one believed was a recently deceased Neandertal man. We can also observe that three of the respondents devote full-time to sasquatch research and related activities.

Opinions on Sasquatch

To the question "Do you feel that some unknown large hairy bipeds, as sasquatch is alleged to be, actually exist?", 11 (42%) answered "yes", 14 (54%) were "undecided", and 1 (4%) answered "no". One "yes" answer and one "undecided" further indicated that they thought that part or all of the phenomena were of a paranormal or psychic nature. Another question asked what percentage of total sasquatch reports represented unknown large hairy bipeds. The mean percentage for the sample was that 35% of the reports represented bipeds, with the remainder being misidentifications, hoaxes, and other causes. For those who responded "yes", this percentage was 44%; for the "undecideds", it was 24%; five persons did not respond to the question at all.

It is interesting to note the following estimates from persons who had carried out both extensive interviewing and extensive fieldwork on sasquatch. The percentages refer to the percentage of sasquatch reports which the respondent feels represent large hairy bipeds:

3%	("yes")
5%	("undecided")
30%	("undecided")
40%	("yes")
40%	("yes")
50%	("yes")
65%	("yes")

It should be noted that the 3% estimate comes from a person who has done a very large amount of fieldwork.

For those who felt that there are "large unknown hairy bipeds", the most persuasive factor was the "coherence or consistency of the evidence", the only factor checked by all eleven "yes" respondents. "Interviews" and "field experiences" were each checked by eight of the "yes" respondents; "laboratory analyses" was checked by six, "laboratory analyses by colleagues or others" by five, and "published eyewitness reports" by four. Apparently the finding of tracks and the analyses of these tracks in the laboratory was a major factor for several of the respondents. The consistency and similarity of reports over long historical periods were mentioned by two respondents;

and one mentioned that for him, the fact that the reports were made in a cultural context that was not supportive of them indicated that the common features of the reports were not accidental.

Among those who were undecided or certain that "large unknown hairy bipeds" did not exist, the following items were checked as reasons for doubting their existence: "lack of physical evidence" (9); "lack of competent observations" (6); "high probability of hoaxes" (6); "indications that belief in sasquatch is superstitious"--two respondents changed wording to "reflective of folklore"--(4); "implausible nature of evidence" (2). One indicated "lack of a carcass" as the strongest reason for doubting; another the "similarity to psychic phenomenal trends."

What would convince the doubters? Not surprisingly, all 14 who answered the question indicated that a live sasquatch would convince them. Next would be a carcass (12); a "long duration sighting by several naturalists" (9); personal observation of a sasquatch (8); "film by a team of naturalists" (5); and "leg-bone from a sasquatch" (5). One respondent mentioned that she would be convinced if some of her personal friends had seen one; another that she would be convinced if there were a "compelling ethnological and psychological framework for ordering the available evidence."

In general, it might be remarked that physical evidence or the lack thereof seems to be an important point for skeptics. On the other hand, for the believers, having the evidence form a consistent pattern seems to be most important, with field and interviewing experiences a close second. Many skeptics would be willing to accept a film or a long-duration sighting by naturalists, although there was concern about the qualifications of the "naturalists" involved.

Suppose that some "large unknown hairy bipeds" exist. What would their biological identity be? Here are the educated guesses of the respondents:

anthropoid
an isolated hairy biped
Gigantopithecus blacki (2 responses)
hominid as opposed to pongid--possible offshoot of *Gigantopithecus*
Gigantopithecus, or an evolved *Paranthropus*, or a devolved *Homo erectus*
paranthropine
hominid
possibly *Gigantopithecus*
sub-human?
the large hairy bipeds might be *Gigantopithecus;* small hairy bipeds might be australopithecines or *Paranthropus*

1) the Himalyan Yeti might be a pongid, possibly *Gigantopithecus*
2) the Wild Hairy Man of Paleoarctic Asia--with extension to South-East Asia--Neandertal Man (highly specialized)
3) sasquatch, according to the footprints is apparently hominid (although obviously not Neandertal), but because of the vagueness of most descriptions of the creature itself possibly not even primate (giant Sloth? more bipedal species of bear?)

Reactions of Colleagues

Considerable anecdotal evidence indicates that doing research on anomalies like sasquatch in an academic environment can be difficult. Hence, one of the questions was "could you characterize the general reaction of your colleagues or work associates to your interest in this area?" For the non-academics, six out of the eight responses indicated that reaction was favorable. For academics, six indicated "favorable", five "indifferent", and five indicated "unfavorable" responses. The findings for academics become more significant, however, when we consider the relation between their attitude toward the existence of sasquatch and the reaction of their colleagues to their anomaly research. Consider the table below.

	COLLEAGUE REACTION		
"Do L.U.H.B.'s Exist?"	Favorable	Indifferent	Unfavorable
Yes	1☆		3
Undecided	4◊	5	2△
No	1		

N = 16

The three academic sasquatch researchers who believe that sasquatch-like creatures exist all perceive their colleagues' reactions as unfavorable. The one example of favorable reaction to a sasquatch believer concerns a biologist who does research on giant squids, not on sasquatch. While the small sample can have no final probative value, the findings seem to confirm the difficulties (at least for believers) of doing sasquatch research in an academic environment.

Since the aim of this poll was to stimulate discussion, I will refrain from drawing any conclusions from the results at this point. I am grateful to the 26 respondents who took the time to fill out the questionnaire, and hope they and others will find this feedback provocative.

Post-Script

One of the questions asked related to the respondent's desire for confidentiality of the response and for anonymity. It is significant that seven out of the sixteen academic respondents asked for anonymity; none of the ten non-academic respondents did. This again confirms the difficulties of academic research on sasquatch.